

# WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

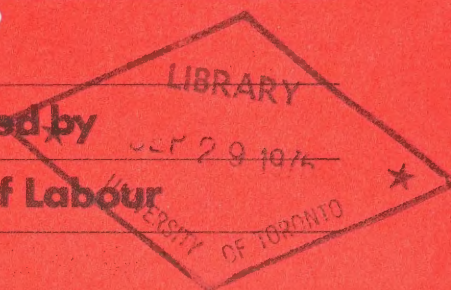
## "FACT & FICTION"

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The number and proportion of women in the Ontario labour force has increased considerably in the past decade. In 1963, women made up 29% of the total work force; by 1973, this figure had jumped to over 35%. In Ontario today, almost 1.4 million women work outside the home, that is almost 44% of the adult female population.

Although the participation rate of women has increased, many misconceptions about working women persist. Such beliefs must be corrected if women are to receive equal treatment in the labour force. The following pages present some of the more common stereotypes about working women and offer evidence which combats these myths.

### (1) WOMEN WORKERS ARE NOT DISADVANTAGED... FALSE

In 1972, 62.4% of Canadian women in the labour force were clustered in clerical, sales and service occupations, compared with only 20.4% of the men. Women worked in fields numerically dominated by women. Thus, 74% of clerical workers and 51% of service workers are women. In the professions, women are again concentrated in "female" low-paying areas. Women are 72% of health professionals, but within that classification they are segregated. They are 3% of dentists, 9% of physicians and surgeons, but 99% of all occupational therapists, nurses and dental hygienists.

In addition to working in job ghettos, women are financially disadvantaged. In 1973, women full-time workers in Canada earned an average of \$5,527 and men \$10,072. Women earned only 54.9% of men's earnings and this was reflected across occupational groups.

Occupation	Women's Average Income As % of Men's
Managerial	56.6%
Professional/Technical	57.6%
Clerical	65.8%
Sales	38.7%
Service/Recreation	43.2%
TOTAL	54.9%

Sylvia Ostry's analysis of the 1961 Canadian Census showed the ratio of female to male earnings as .55. That is women's average incomes were 55% of men's. She then adjusted for human capital differences (i.e. age, job level and seniority) and found this raised the ratio to .80 (women's incomes 80% of men's). She concluded that "even after accounting for differences in the work year, occupational deployment and 'quality' of labour between the sexes, there remained fairly sizeable pay gaps between male and female workers in Canada."<sup>(1)</sup>

### (2) WOMEN WORK ONLY FOR FRILLS... FALSE

In Ontario, 36.8% of the female labour force in March, 1975 were single, divorced or widowed. Self-supporting women such as these work out of necessity, *not* for pin money.

Female family heads are one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society. In Ontario, the average income of a male-headed family is \$11,905, of a female-headed family, \$6,016 (1971 Census.) Although 15.8% of Canadian families are classified as low income, 43.7% of those with a female head fall in this category. To expand on that point, 7.4% of *all* families but 20.4% of low income families are headed by a woman.

Many married women work because their husbands are not paid enough to support another adult and two or three children. These women must work to supplement their husband's income. According to the 1971 Census, 23% of Canadian husband-wife families with only one wage earner had incomes of less than \$5,000. Only 17.6% of those with husband and wife wage earners were in this category. Economic necessity such as this is a major factor in the increased participation rate of married women in the labour force (from 40.4% in 1973 to 43% in 1974.)



### **(3) WOMEN WOULDN'T WORK IF ECONOMIC REASONS DIDN'T FORCE THEM TO ... FALSE**

An American study done in 1972, asked the following question of a nationwide probability sample of working men and women. "If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work?" 74% of the men and 57% of the women said yes. Most of the sex difference was a result of the response of married women who were less likely to continue to work if economic pressure was relieved.<sup>(2)</sup>

Many women in Canada work for their personal fulfillment and emotional well-being. Their right to employment must not be denied in a free society.

### **(4) WOMEN DON'T QUALIFY FOR BETTER PAYING JOBS ... FALSE**

The decade 1961-1971 showed a dramatic increase in the level of education of Ontario's total labour force. Women workers, however, remained somewhat better educated than the men. In 1971, 19% of the women in the labour force and 27% of the men had less than grade 9 education.

On a Canada-wide basis, in 1972, 26% of women in the labour force and 18.3% of the men had completed high school. An additional 10.1% of women and 4.6% of men had post-secondary, non-university training and 6.9% of women and 9.1% of men had completed university.

The more educated a Canadian woman is, the more likely she is to work. Unfortunately, the academic qualifications of women are alone insufficient in enabling them to obtain non-stereotyped jobs.

### **(5) WOMEN SHOULD STICK TO "WOMEN'S JOBS" AND NOT "COMPETE" FOR "MEN'S JOBS" ... FALSE**

The idea of men's jobs and women's jobs is a culturally defined one, based on tradition and not fact or inherent ability. A survey of almost 400 cultures found jobs were classified according to sex in virtually all cases.<sup>(3)</sup> It was also discovered, however, that all jobs were performed by men in some societies and women in others. Thus, agriculture is a "male" occupation in North America but a "female" occupation among the Kalahari bushpeople.

During World War II, women performed many jobs in areas now considered predominantly male. They were welders, riveters and truck drivers to cite only a few occupations. Our attitudes concerning sex typing of jobs must be changed in

recognition that such attitudes are not rooted in fact. The belief that a particular job is the domain of one sex or another must be eliminated.

One reason for the labelling of jobs as male or female is the North American concept of women as being passive. All psychiatrists in the United States were polled as to whether they felt women were passive and nurturant by nature. 71% of the respondents believed that this description was a social stereotype and not a natural state for women. Yet women are encouraged to choose nurturant jobs such as nursing because such jobs are supposed to fit their nature.

### **(6) FEMALE HORMONES HAMPER JOB PERFORMANCE ... FALSE**

Little scientific evidence supports the idea that women's physiology adversely affects job performance. A study by Margaret Mead showed that in a South Sea island culture where women were not taught to expect emotional change, none was noticed. Research has shown that men also have hormonal cycles. A trucking company in Japan actually reduced its accident rate significantly by charting its male drivers' cycles.<sup>(4)</sup>

Research has shown that men and women engaged in stimulating occupations suffer minimal effects during menopause and other cycles.

### **(7) MARRIED WOMEN TAKE JOBS AWAY FROM MEN: THEY OUGHT TO QUIT THESE JOBS AND LEAVE THE LABOUR FORCE ... FALSE**

In March, 1975, there were 866,000 married women in the Ontario labour force. At the same time, there were 176,000 unemployed men. If all the married women left the labour force and their jobs were taken by the unemployed men, 690,000 jobs would remain empty. In addition, most unemployed men do not have the education or the skills to fill many of the jobs held by married women, e.g., teachers, secretaries, nurses and the democratic right to work is guaranteed to all citizens in our society, not just to men.

### **(8) WORKING MOTHERS HARM CHILDREN ... FALSE**

Researchers have found no significant differences between the children of mothers who work and children of mothers who stay home. In some cases, the former group of children has been found to be more self-reliant.

A European study of people raised by nannies indicated a stronger moral influence of parents because the latter were not involved in day to day physical care.



Studies looking at causes of juvenile delinquency do not show employment of mothers to be a determining factor.

### **(9) WOMEN DON'T WANT RESPONSIBILITY OR PROMOTION . . . FALSE**

Some men don't want increased responsibility or promotion either but they are at least given the choice. In the U.S. a nationwide survey found 64% of men and 48% of women answered positively when asked if they wanted promotion. Furthermore, the lack of desire in many of the remaining people was a direct result of expectations. The apparent lack of ambition was often a result of being in a dead-end job. Two-thirds of the women surveyed never expected to be promoted.<sup>(5)</sup>

### **(10) WOMEN WORKERS HAVE HIGHER RATES OF ABSENTEEISM AND TURNOVER THAN DO MEN . . . FALSE**

Charges that women are absent more often than men and that they have higher rates of turnover have proven unfounded through research in Canada.

Canadian figures on absenteeism rates show that in 1972, 1.76% of full-time women workers were absent for the whole of a particular week as opposed to 1.95% of the men. Males, however, had fewer short term absences (less than 1 week), .87% as opposed to 1.43%. Kay Archibalds' study on the Federal Public Service found that women take only 1.24 more days leave per year than men.<sup>(6)</sup>

In Archibald's study, women's separation rates, that is their job leaving rates, were higher than men's. Three factors must be considered, however:

- (1) Occupational level—Women's separation rates are lower in the higher level occupations. High separation rates for men and women are found in low level jobs. Since this is where the majority of women are found, women therefore "appear" to be less stable employees.
- (2) Income—Separation rates are higher for both sexes in low income groups. Here again, proportionately more women are found in these groups.
- (3) Age—Separation rates are higher amongst younger employees and a greater proportion of female public servants are in the younger age groups.

If one controls for the above factors, that is if you compare men and women of *similar* occupational level, income and age, women are found to be no less stable in their employment patterns than their male counterparts.

### **(11) NO ONE LIKES TO WORK FOR A FEMALE BOSS . . . FALSE**

In late 1974, a Gallup Poll was done questioning a representative sample of 1,000 Canadians on their preference for a male or female boss. Although many more people preferred a male boss to a female boss (41.5% versus 6%), the largest group of respondents said the sex of their boss was irrelevant (47.5%). When the same question was asked of the Canadian public in 1954 and 1964, only 18% and 25% respectively of those answering had no preference and the majority expressed a strong desire to work for a man. An age breakdown of the 1974 results shows the 18-29 year-old age group to be the least concerned about the sex of their superior.

A study undertaken by the Ontario Ministry of Revenue in 1975 found that over half of the respondents would feel comfortable working for a woman. Broken down by sex, 70.2% of women and 48.2% of men said they would be comfortable in such a position. An additional 11.8% of the women and 22.3% of the men were undecided. An interesting result was that many more people believe that men are uncomfortable working for a woman than men indicated by their responses.

### **(12) WOMEN ARE MORE CONCERNED THAN MEN ABOUT THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF THEIR JOBS . . . FALSE**

An American study done in 1972 asked a nationwide probability sample of 539 working women and 933 working men to assess the importance of four facets of job satisfaction:

- (1) my co-workers are friendly and helpful
- (2) my supervisor is very concerned about the welfare of those under him
- (3) I am given lots of chances to make friends
- (4) my supervisor is competent doing his job

Response to the above showed only one sex difference. More women (68%) than men (61%) indicated it was important to them that co-workers be friendly and helpful. Other statements were rated as equally important by men and women.<sup>(7)</sup>

### **(13) YOU CAN'T HIRE A YOUNG WOMAN IN A RESPONSIBLE POSITION; SHE'LL GET PREGNANT AND LEAVE YOU WITHIN TWO YEARS . . . FALSE**

The chief childbearing and childrearing years are those from 20-44. In Ontario, these are the years of highest participation of women in the labour force.

- 67.2% of women 20-24 are in the labour force
- 53.7% of women 25-34 are in the labour force
- 54.9% of women 35-44 are in the labour force



Women are working at this time of their lives either because they want to or out of economic necessity. In 1970, 33% of Ontario's employed women had children under 16 and 11% under 6.

Although many women do leave the labour force for a number of years to raise their children, an increasing number either do not or cannot. Ontario's new pregnancy leave regulations allow 17 weeks flexible leave and permit women to return to work following the birth of a child with no loss of seniority or benefits nor a drop in salary.

**(14) WOMEN ARE NOT AS MOBILE AS MEN: YOU CAN'T TRANSFER A WOMAN BECAUSE HER HUSBAND'S JOB MUST COME FIRST ... FALSE**

36.8% of the working women in Ontario are single, widowed or divorced. Such women are able to relocate with no difficulty attributable to their sex.

With respect to married women workers, two facts must be remembered:

- (1) Many couples no longer relocate according to the husband's career needs only. The employment status of both partners is considered when a question of transfer arises.
- (2) Many men are now refusing relocation. They are unwilling to move their families on a regular basis.

The purpose of both of the above points is to illustrate that it is a faulty assumption to suppose that women cannot or will not relocate according to job demands. Staffing demands must not be based on often outmoded sex stereotypes.

**(15) YOU CAN'T HIRE A WOMAN IN A JOB WHERE SHE WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL WITH MALE EMPLOYEES. THE WIVES OF THE LATTER WILL COMPLAIN ... FALSE**

A staffing decision based on the above assumption is discriminatory. A woman employee should be considered as a professional in the same way as a male employee would be.

**(16) YOU CAN'T HIRE A MARRIED WOMAN IN A JOB WHERE SHE WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL BECAUSE SHE HAS TOO MANY RESPONSIBILITIES TO FULFILL AT HOME ... FALSE**

An employer should not make decisions based on traditional role stereotypes. If a woman applies for a job requiring her to travel it should be assumed that she is aware that she will be on the road and can make alternate household arrangements in her absence.

**(17) WOMEN IN THE PAID LABOUR FORCE HAVE THE SAME DESIRES FOR RECOGNITION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ADVANCEMENT AS DO THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS ... TRUE**

**REFERENCES**

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